

**RAILROAD COMMISSIONERS.**

One of the important questions that the people must decide at the coming election is whether or not Nebraska shall have an elective railroad commission. An amendment to the constitution providing for such a commission has been submitted by the legislature to be adopted or rejected by the people.

The provisions of the amendment are briefly as follows: There shall be three railroad commissioners to be elected by popular vote at the regular election in 1893. One is to serve one year, one two years and one three years, and each year thereafter one is to be elected to serve three years. The duties and compensation of these commissioners shall be fixed by law. The amendment contains a proviso giving the governor power to appoint three commissioners to serve till the election in 1893.

Under our system, the adoption and amendment of the constitution, the highest acts of legislation, have been wisely left to the direct action of the whole people. The adoption of constitutional amendments is a matter that should receive most careful and earnest consideration of the people. But it does not as a rule. Usually they receive little discussion in the newspapers, and less in political meetings. The amendments are placed in bungling fashion at the end of the ballot, and if the voter cares to express a choice, the chances are that he doesn't know how to mark the ballot so as to express his choice.

There is need of a reform in this matter. Every constitutional amendment proposed should receive thorough discussion on the rostrum and in the press. It should be weighed by every voter, and as far as possible without partisan prejudice. Then every voter should cast a vote either for or against such amendment.

Eight years ago, an amendment providing for an elective railroad commission was submitted to the voters of Nebraska, and was rejected by a decided majority, although a great many voters failed to express any choice. The republican majority in the legislature, however, following its usual custom, disregarded the voice of the people, and created a commission consisting of three of the state officers. Inasmuch as these officers had their regular duties to perform, provision was made for the appointment of three secretaries to do the work of the commission. This law was passed by the legislature of 1885. In 1887, the commission was transformed into a board of transportation by adding two other state officers. This law has remained in force ever since. The board consists of the auditor, secretary of state, commissioner of public lands and buildings, treasurer and attorney general. This board chooses three secretaries who constitute the real acting force of the board.

Both the commission and the board of transportation were created at the dictation of the railroad corporations, and the service and protection of railroad interests have been the chief business performed by the secretaries. Neither their creation by the legislature, nor the course they have pursued has ever been ratified by the people of Nebraska.

There undoubtedly exists among the voters of the state a strong prejudice against a railroad commission of any kind. And this prejudice has grown out of the facts stated above. Is this

prejudice well founded? Does Nebraska's experience with railroad commissioners justify patriotic citizens in voting against this amendment? These questions, and many others bearing on this subject ought to be discussed, and we propose to discuss them in these columns.

Nebraska's experience is a matter of secondary importance. We have had the same experience with the office of governor, and with the state legislature. Indeed if prostitution of an office in the service of railroad corporations in Nebraska were sufficient reason for doing away with that office, what offices could escape condemnation?

The railroad commissioners, and their secretaries have served the railroads for precisely the same reason that the governors, lieutenant governors, and majorities in the legislatures have served them, viz: Because they were nominated and elected by the corporations and their tools.

Because Boyd vetoed the Newberry bill is no reason for dispensing with the office of governor. If Powers had got the seat to which he was justly elected, the Newberry bill would be in force today. So if the men nominated by the independents for the other state offices had been elected and seated, we would have today a board of transportation serving the people as faithfully as the present board is serving the railroads. Eight years ago the corporations wanted a commission because they knew that Nebraska's government was in their control. They knew that they could elect their tools for members of the commission. For these very reasons the anti-monopoly voters of the state opposed a commission. They were politically helpless. The machinery of the republican party was in the hands of the railroads. Nothing but a railroad tool could secure a nomination in a republican convention unless by accident.

The democratic party was a hopeless unorganized minority. The effort to form a new party had proved a failure. Under those conditions, it is no wonder the people voted down the amendment.

But now all this is changed. The power and prestige of the republican party is broken. The people who want reforms are no longer at the mercy of republican conventions. They have a new party, whose watchword is 'reform,' a party which already controls the law making branch of our state government, and has the excellent prospects of controlling all executive offices in the near future. If a railroad commission shall be created at the coming election, it will be filled, not by railroad tools, but by faithful servants of the people. Its duties will be defined by a legislature that is in sympathy with the people.

This brings us to the real question involved: Whether or not a railroad commission is a proper and necessary instrument for enforcing laws for the control and regulation of railroads. This question will be discussed in a future issue.

ANOTHER fusion lie has been nailed. North Dakota independents are in the middle of the road.

A DESPERATE fight is being made upon Shrader, the independent candidate for lieutenant governor, by the republican press. He is represented as an anarchist, when the truth is he is only a revolter against republican misrule.—Lincoln Herald.

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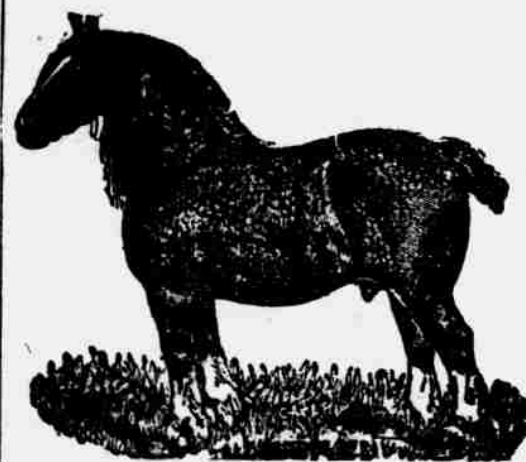
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